

VZCZCXRO1465

OO RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDT RUEHGI RUEHJS RUEHKUK
RUEHLH RUEHPB RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHJA #0970/01 1561052
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 051052Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2488
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000970

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS; EAP/RSP; NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [KISL](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S CAIRO SPEECH EVOKES POSITIVE
REACTIONS IN INDONESIA

1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulates Surabaya and Medan.

2. (U) SUMMARY: Prominent Indonesians of different faiths praised President Obama's "soothing" speech to Muslim world communities on June 4. One of his advisors told Pol/C that President Yudhoyono was "highly impressed" with the speech. Indonesians we spoke to appreciated President Obama's message of mutual respect and broad outreach to Muslims. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates held public diplomacy events to engage audiences immediately following the speech, which got blanket coverage in national print and electronic media. Still, audiences viewed aspects of the speech focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a dose of skepticism. Overall, the speech was a big hit in this, the world's largest Muslim nation by population. END SUMMARY.

WATCHING AND DISCUSSING THE SPEECH

3. (U) Embassy Jakarta and Consulates Surabaya and Medan organized screenings of President Obama's speech to the Muslim world on June 4, gathering together youth and prominent Muslim leaders--as well as those of other faiths--to discuss the speech and gauge reaction. In Jakarta, the chair of the nation's second largest Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah (30 million members), Din Syamsuddin, co-hosted a live screening with the U.S. Embassy at the Center for Dialogue and Cooperation Among Civilizations (CDCC).

4. (U) The Jakarta program included a panel of respected religious leaders and scholars plus emboffs. The audience included 150 youth, national religious leaders, politicians, journalists and diplomats (including the ambassadors of Egypt and Turkey among others). In Surabaya, East Java, 60 youth and regional leaders, including representatives from both of the nation's largest Muslim organizations, attended an event at the Consul General's Residence. In Medan, hundreds viewed the speech on screens in a courtyard of Sumatra's most prestigious university.

PROMINENT MUSLIMS POSITIVE

5. (U) The speech garnered tremendous goodwill and trust. One of President Yudhoyono's advisors told Pol/C that Yudhoyono was "highly impressed." Abdillah Toha, a venerable Parliamentarian with the Muslim-based National Mandate Party, said, "I think Indonesia and the Muslim world should support Obama, so that we will be successful," a sentiment echoed by senior Golkar Party Parliamentarian Theo Sambuaga. During the CDCC panel discussion, Din Syamsuddin, sometimes a vocal critic of U.S. foreign policy towards the Muslim world, called the speech "soothing", commending that it proposed "broadening engagement with the Muslim world" based on

"common interests such as education." We heard similar comments at our screenings and from messages across Indonesia:

--"Obama went right into the lion's mouth. Even though he knew people are very suspicious of Americans in the Middle East, he went in there bravely. This proves he really wants to have a dialogue." - Student at University of North Sumatra

--"The speech needs to be translated and widely distributed. Indonesians haven't heard this before, especially the rank and file. People in the countryside have misperceptions and need to hear what Mr. Obama had to say." - Aguswandi, well known scholar and political leader in Aceh Province.

-- "Muslims around the world should support his dream. Muslims should be proud of him." - Professor Adbul Kadir of National Islamic University in Surabaya.

--"President Obama's speech must be appreciated because it has opened a new era of relations between the West and Islam. It is an indication of a change in the U.S. stance towards the Islamic world." - Hidayat Nur Wahid, leader of the upper house of Parliament with the Islamic-based Prosperous Justice Party.

¶6. (U) Audiences also appreciated that the speech focused on education, democracy and women's empowerment, thrilled that Indonesia was cited as an Islamic nation which has been led by a woman President. They applauded each of the four times Indonesia was mentioned. People praised content about fighting extremism, as one student said: "Everyone says America is at war with Islam. But Obama explained America is fighting extremists."

JAKARTA 00000970 002 OF 002

¶7. (U) Most people thought the speech was balanced on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in the words of one person, "highlighting not only the U.S. connection with Israel but the aspirations of Palestinians." Nevertheless, everyone was skeptical, saying they are waiting for actions to prove that the U.S. can solve the conflict. Parliamentarian Adillah Toha said: "People are waiting for him to give a new perspective on how to solve the problem in the Middle East."

¶8. (U) Some Indonesians also commented that the speech was aimed more at the Arab world than countries such as Indonesia, where democracy, tolerance, respect for human rights and the rights of women are already entrenched. The timing of the speech was also not perfect for Indonesia, as evening prayers began during the speech, so that many had to say their prayers before the live speech was finished.

¶9. (U) The Obama Cairo speech was carried live by all national TV stations with news programs. Metro TV carried it via VOA Indonesian Service. Numerous other major national television networks carried speech highlights for their evening news broadcasts. In addition there were articles and positive editorials in most major national daily newspapers, including a full front page article in leading national daily "Koran Tempo" whose chief editor was sent to Cairo to interview President Obama. The tone of coverage was on the whole positive and cited the numerous references that President Obama made to Indonesia as a tolerant Muslim-majority democracy.

WIDELY DISSEMINATED

¶10. (U) Embassy Jakarta posted the instructions on getting SMS updates in English, Arabic and several other languages, both on its webpage and in all press materials read and published. In addition, the link for the live streaming of the speech was on Post's Facebook "fan" page. Also, the Indonesian text of the speech was quickly and widely distributed to the media and to more than 400 individual Mission contacts.

¶11. (U) Already buoyed by President Obama's election, Indonesians came away from the speech with a strong feeling that there is a new beginning in relations with the U.S., both in terms of its relations with Islam and with Indonesia on a broader range of issues.

HUME